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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS

Statement submitted by Soroptimist International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2009/1.

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Statement*

Soroptimist International is a vibrant, dynamic organisation for today's professional and business women. We are committed to a world where women and girls together achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities worldwide.

We have over 90,000 members, in 125 countries and territories around the world, who are inspiring action and creating opportunities to transform the life of women and girls through their global network of members and international partnerships. As a non-governmental organisation Soroptimist International is committed to playing its part as a Formal Partner with the World Health Organisation in the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS-UNAIDS.

Soroptimist International recognises that all caring responsibility, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS, should be of equal responsibility between women and men. Millennium Development Goal 3, promoting gender equality and empowerment of women, is a particular focus of our organisation. Our own Programme Focus Objectives include 'Eliminate poverty and gender discrimination through ensuring women's full social and economic rights' and 'Support programmes and policies that eliminate HIV/AIDS'.

Through programmes of service Soroptimist International members and clubs advocate, and have developed and supported work, to promote this cause worldwide in activities such as:

- Project Sierra: A Family and a Future is a partnership between Soroptimist International and Hope and Homes for Children focussing on Sierra Leone. It is designed to support families headed by children, young women and ageing grandparents. The aim is to provide adequate resources, education, training and small business and life skills. This enables caregiving in a post-conflict and AIDS-affected country.

- Many clubs are working with UNICEF in their 'Born Free' campaign. Members are raising funds in many ways to enable HIV-affected women to have babies free from HIV. The funds-raised resources care for the women, their babies and their future.

- Clubs, particularly in Africa, are working with communities, schools and orphanages giving support in many ways to promote positive care for vulnerable children- especially those affected by HIV/AIDS. Educational resources, clothes, cooking utensils and play equipment are provided. Members also give their time and expertise to care, train and educate the children and their mothers.

- Many clubs have links across the world and resources to fund caregiving in HIV/AIDS projects are supported both by partnering with SI 'friendship clubs' and other Service Organisations.

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* Issued without formal editing.

Soroptimist International recognizes that there are initiatives in which equal sharing of responsibility between women and men, especially caregiving in the HIV/AIDS context is integral. We urge Governments and members of civil society to join with us and increase our collective efforts to:

- Ensure equal access to resources which are available to caregivers in all circumstances.
- Provide, and ensure equal access to, adequate resources to support both HIV/AIDS victims and their carers.
- Provide education programmes, especially for teenage boys and girls in schools, highlighting the disease, its consequences and the responsibilities of caregiving within the family.
- Resource major efforts to research, treatment development and caregiving, making certain that women are equal partners in all discussions and decisions made.
- Provide care facilities to all HIV/AIDS patients, ensuring equal standards and dignity to both men and women.
- Ensure that child, and grandparent headed-households, have resources and support available to them to enable children to continue their education.
- To support UNAIDS programmes and projects with financial resources and activities.
- Support work furthering gender equality and equity especially in the field of caregiving.

Our Members network with Governments, non-governmental, voluntary and all other appropriate bodies to encourage inter-agency collaboration and co-operation, in recognition that only global programmes will be truly effective in changing attitudes and releasing resources needed to enable equal sharing in responsibility of caregiving to be a reality.